

Message #12**II Thessalonians 3:13-18**

The endings to things are sometimes more significant than the beginning of things. For example, in baseball it isn't so much how the season begins, it is how it ends. In learning, it isn't so much how you start but how you finish. When I was in school, I remember that semesters didn't always start out the best. You were taking a new course with a new instructor or teacher and you didn't know what to expect. But it wasn't so much how the course began; it was how did it end and what was the final grade. Endings are often more significant than beginnings.

This principle is certainly true when it comes to God. Endings are very important. We come to faith in Christ and then start the process of Christianity and what God wants is for us to finish well. We have our share of ups and downs and successes and failures, but what God wants for us is to finish well. Many start to run the race, but the key is to finish the race.

This is why I think it is so intriguing to study the endings of inspired books of the Bible. The Scriptures claim that "every word" is inspired by God. That would certainly include the words that start a book and the words that end a book. What this means is that the words should be carefully analyzed.

That is certainly true when we come to the ending of a book like II Thessalonians. This Thessalonian church was a very special church. Paul wrote two specific letters to this church. This was a great church. In fact, Paul had never seen any church quite like it.

It was a church that loved Jesus Christ and it loved the Word of God. When the Word of God was preached in this church the people did not view it as the word of men, but as the Word coming from God. Paul was so touched by this church that he bragged about it and spoke proudly about it to other churches (II Thess. 1:4). This was a church that embraced grace and faith and they stuck to it even when the Judaizers were putting pressure on them to go back under law.

PAUL CHALLENGES THE CHURCH TO STAY COMMITTED TO OBEYING THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD SO IT CAN CONTINUE TO RECEIVE ALL OF THE BLESSINGS OF GOD.

That is the essence of this last message Paul gives to the Thessalonians—stay focused on the understanding and applying the written Scriptures, because this focus is what leads to the blessings of God. Many of those blessings are in this life and most assuredly in the next life.

There are about six final messages that Paul gives to the Thessalonians:

FINAL MESSAGE #1 – God's people should not grow weary of doing good. 3:13

There is no question that church life and ministry can be physically, mentally and emotionally draining. It can be spiritually fatiguing.

First of all, you have your own struggles in your own life and then you go to church and find out that there is a war being fought. You can begin to grow weary of even doing good. The word “weary” means you can begin to lose heart in even doing good.

Now the word “good” (καλος) used in this verse specifically refers to doing things that maintain an outward form of what is beautiful, excellent, good and honorable (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 228-229). This word “good” may refer to a variety of situations and contexts.

When you live in a religious world that doesn’t care if it reverences God or carefully study God’s Word or understands Pauline grace or eschatology, or when you live in a social world in which most people don’t care if they pay their bills or even work, the tendency can be for you to throw up your hands and give up. You can begin to grow weary to the point you want to give up and quit.

When you look around the world and you see others who don’t care if they ever do what is right according to God, you can begin to say, “what is the use?” You can begin to think “I am trying to govern my life by the Word of God. I am given to carefully understanding the Word of God and the truth of God and most of the people in the religious world aren’t interested in that, so why go on or why bother?”

Paul says don’t do that. Keep faithful. Stick to it. Keep doing good and don’t lose heart.

FINAL MESSAGE #2 – God’s people should not associate with a non-obedient brother or sister. **3:14-15**

It is very obvious from this text that it is an expectation that Grace Age judgments will be made in the church. It is a good thing to do. It is a right thing to do. It is an expectation of God.

Now we must be very careful here because there are religious groups who promote a non-association with those not conforming to some man-made system of rules and regulations. There are religious denominations and associations that are known for inventing rules the Scriptures do not present and they judge other people and promote an unbiblical separation that is not warranted in this text.

Now the specific challenge here is to be on the lookout for those who are not interested in carefully understanding and applying the written Scriptures to their lives. In the specific context of verse 14, it would be in regard to specific Pauline instruction. Paul says if anyone does not obey “our instruction” (τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν), literally “the word of us” in “this letter” (τῆς ἐπιστολῆς). So clearly what Paul had in mind were those who did not embrace his Grace Age teaching in the inspired Scriptures.

So we would suggest that we need to carefully understand the written Scriptures, especially the Pauline Scriptures, and we need to be on the lookout for those who don’t care if they understand them and apply them.

So if you spot someone who is more interested in keeping the Law or religious codes or denominational dictates more than understanding and obeying the written Pauline Scriptures, you are to take four specific actions:

Action #1 - We are to note that person. **3:14b**

Now the words “take special note of that man” is a word that means to mark that person in a distinguishing way. Mark this person as separate from the others. But this identification is not a positive one; it is negative.

The church must always be on guard for people who are in it who are not interested in accurately understanding God’s Word.

Action #2 - We are not to associate with that person. **3:14c**

Now the words “do not associate” (συναναμύγνυμι) is a present tense, middle voice infinitive. What this means is Paul is speaking of continual action that we, in and of ourselves, have the responsibility to carry out.

I understand this to mean that when we spot one at church who is not walking in accordance with the Word of God and the apostolic teachings, we are to see to it that we do not continually associate or mix with that person. The point of the present tense is continual, habitual action. So there may be points of time when there is some sort of association with the marked person; however, there should never be a continual mixing or mingling.

There may be situations and various points of time when we find ourselves face to face with the individual, who is not walking in accordance with the Word of God or will of God. There may be family gatherings or church events such as weddings or funerals in which the one in rebellion attends. There is nothing we can do about that and that is not what this text is talking about. This text is speaking about a continual association and a continual mixing with those who are in rebellion. We need to stay away from these people, not befriend them.

The reason why we are not to associate with that person is so that he will be put to shame. This principle needs to be applied by adults and by young people. You need to carefully limit who you allow to be your friend.

Action #3 - We are not to consider the person to be an enemy. **3:15a**

The word translated “enemy” (ἐχθρός) is an interesting Greek word. It is a word that implies do not consider this person in a hateful and hostile way (*Ibid.*, p. 192). So we may assume that there are times when some should be considered in this way. This is what most people do not understand. There is a legitimate Biblical, God-honoring type of hatred.

There are many passages of Scripture that actually teach us much about the hatred of God:

Leviticus 18 - lists things God hates; Psalm 5:5; 11:5 - lists people God hates; Proverbs 6:16-19 lists things and people God hates. In fact, Paul wrote in Romans 12:9 that we are to hate that which is evil.

However, God does not want us hating a brother or sister who is not focused on the Scriptures. He does not want us associating with them, but He does not want us hating them.

Action #4 - We are to admonish that person as a brother. **3:15b**

It is interesting to me that the noun “brother” is anarthrous, which means this is the character and quality of a brother or sister. We are to consider the person as being in the family of God.

The word “admonish” (νουθετεω) is fascinating. It is a word that means to exhort and put in people’s minds something in a very sensible way.

When we spot a brother or sister who has drifted away from a focus on God’s precious Word and apostolic instruction, we are not to walk around with a holier than thou attitude; but we are to mentally challenge that person to get back in line with the Word of God.

A commitment to understanding and applying the Scriptures will separate the wheat from the chaff. Over time, you will discover who wants to carefully understand God’s Word and who doesn’t. You will see who would rather have man-made rules and traditions than inspired truth. But we need to stick to our guns and not grow weary of this commitment.

FINAL MESSAGE #3 – May the God of peace grant you His peace. **3:16a**

Do you see who it is that can bring peace to your life? It is the Lord. God is the one who can bring peace and tranquility to a chaotic life and situation.

The actual Greek reads: “Now the Lord Himself may give to you **the peace**.” The noun peace is articular, so we are speaking here of having the peace of God. Paul qualifies where we may expect to have this peace “in every circumstance.” Now the word “circumstance” (τροπος) refers to every way, fashion and manner of our own character (*Ibid.*, p. 451).

This speaks of a very specific, God-given peace that we may have all of the time even when we are living in sinful bodies in a chaotic and sinful world. By staying committed to understanding the Scriptures, God will impart to us His supernatural peace all the way through life. Paul wanted that and prayed for that for the Thessalonians.

FINAL MESSAGE #4 – The Lord is with you all. **3:16b**

This final statement in **verse 16** is more of a statement that God is in fact with you. God is with His church and He is with everyone who is connected to His church.

Now by using the noun “Lord” he is specifically identifying the fact that Jesus Christ, who is the Lord, is with all of His people.

FINAL MESSAGE #5 – Paul personally wrote this inspired letter himself. **3:17**

We may recall that some forged letter was floating around claiming it was from Paul (II Thess. 2:1-2). Paul wanted these Thessalonians to realize that this letter was the real deal. This was an inspired letter of God.

Now let’s just consider this point for a moment. We have just gone through two letters that are in God’s precious Word that were written by the hand of Paul. Paul, the great Grace Age apostle, wrote these letters and we have had the privilege of studying and analyzing them.

Paul wanted these Thessalonians and God wants us to understand that these books of the Bible are not just written by a bunch of religious men. This is an apostolic writing written by an apostle who has literally seen and been instructed by Jesus Christ.

FINAL MESSAGE #6 – The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with you all. **3:18**

This is Paul’s entire system of doctrine—God’s grace. God’s grace is with every believer and Paul wanted every believer to know that.

The grace system is centered on one Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. Without a relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, one is lost; but by faith in Jesus Christ you are connected to the entire system of grace.

Now we make this final observation. All of these things were written to a church. So if we want to experience God’s grace and peace and blessings, we will need to finish well by being involved in a church given to carefully understanding the written Scriptures and understanding Grace Age teaching.

The danger is to drift away from this focus. We must always make this our focus. If at the end of our lives the testimony is you were like the Thessalonians—you loved to learn the Scriptures so that you could apply it to your lives—you are rich.